DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 240 203 UD 023 347

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TITLE A Conceptual Study of Knowledge Use in Schools. Final Report (Draft).
INSTITUTION Educational Testing Service, Princeton, N.J.
SPONS AGENCY National Inst. of Education (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE Jun 82
GRANT NIE-G-81-0028
NOTE 49p.; For a related document, see ED 217 549.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Curriculum Development; Educational Improvement; *Educational Principles; Educational Theories; Elementary Education; Feedback; Field Studies; Learning Theories; *Principals; Program Effectiveness; *Reading Programs; School Effectiveness; *Teaching Models; Urban Schools
IDENTIFIERS *Knowledge Utilization

ABSTRACT

The analysis of conceptual issues related to the perception and use of knowledge by classroom teachers and school administrators in improvement programs, specifically in urban elementary reading programs, was the primary goal of this study. To begin, a distinction was made between knowledge sources that constitute the initial bases for program development and working sources of knowledge necessary for program implementation. These knowledge sources were further divided into sources external and internal to the classroom, with the latter (in the form of information about students revealed only during the teaching process) being regarded as essential to productive teaching. Field studies in four urban public schools showed this conceptualization to be inadequate. Two distinct knowledge bases used to define programs at the different sites were identified. One, the "procedural" knowledge base, which was found in centrally controlled schools, emphasized the techniques of teaching and left little room for teacher or principal response to student feedback. The other, the "theoretical" knowledge base found in more autonomous schools, took the form of principles, maxims, and precepts about ways that teachers teach and children learn, and allowed teachers and principals to respond to student feedback. In view of the importance of student feedback to effective teaching, the growing national trend toward the procedural rather than the theoretical model raises disturbing questions about the effectiveness of programs designed to improve schooling and/or enhance educational equity. Following the narrative, sample teacher interviews from the four schools, and interview guidelines are appended. (CMG)

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A CONCEPTUAL STUDY OF KNOWLEDGE USE IN SCHOOLS

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June 1982

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UD023 347

Draft Final Report to the National Institute of Education
(Research Grant #NIE-G-81-0028)

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Focus and Goals of the Study

The primary goal of this study is the analysis of conceptual issues related to the perception and use of knowledge by classroom teachers and school administrators in urban, elementary schools. More specifically, the study focuses on knowledge inherent in programs that seek to improve schooling and/or to enhance educational equity through practices designed to effect the reading and language competencies of students.

In terms of sheer numbers, programs with intended impact on reading, writing, and language performance account for a large proportion of all elementary school improvement endeavors. The focus is therefore reasonably comprehensive. In addition, reading instruction is an area where school improvement concerns and equity concerns most frequently meet--either merging in complementary ways, clashing head on, or working at cross purposes. As a conspicuous example of clash, the research literature (e.g., Gibson & Levin, 1975; Resnick & Weaver, 1979) generally concludes that no one method of reading instruction is best for all students; and this conclusion generally coincides with an accepted body of practical wisdom in teaching. Yet increasingly, programs intended for poor minority children prescribe a particular instructional method. On the surface, at least, such programs appear at odds with the knowledge sources of research and experience which suggest that there will be diversity in approaches to learning among any given group of children.

Reading programs encompass considerable variation in theoretical posture and in primary or preferred instructional emphasis (phonics, sight words, language experience, 'eclectic' etc.) Moreover, cutting across these differences in 'content' emphasis is extensive variation in administrative and classroom management requirements. Some programs, for instance, require specialist roles and/or stipulate particular criteria for the grouping of pupils. Programs vary too in the scope of decision making expected of the classroom teacher. These and other characteristics of reading programs, apparent at the surface level of program description, are widely recognized and commented upon in the professional literature. What remains less explored, however, is how

the knowledge embedded in a reading program, be it ideological, practical or organizational in content, is communicated and transformed by the school's staff in the actual process of program implementation.

We began the study with a general conceptualization of knowledge sources that may be used in educational decisions. We found it useful to distinguish knowledge sources of educational programs that constitute the initial bases for program development, from working sources of knowledge that are necessary for program implementation. If pictured along two parallel planes, these knowledge sources may be further divided into sources that are external to the classroom, and those that are internal to the classroom. This conception of educational programs is presented in Figure I.

Although intended more for illustrative than definitive purposes, Figure I schematizes a multitude of program possibilities. Starting with plane (a), it seems evident that most school programs are based on one or more initial sources of knowledge external to the classroom. For example, programs emphasizing criterion-referenced tests and instructional materials are usually based on an analysis of learning tasks into their component parts, with further analysis often producing logical sequence for the parts. The use of behavioral objectives may be traced to measurement models; several comprehensive programs (such as those represented in Follow Through) claim one or another model of learning or development as their basis.

Programs developed during the curriculum reform movement of the 1960s, received their primary impetus from a reconceptualization of knowledge in particular disciplines of the physical and social science [Heath, 1964]. In some cases, empirical work has been the major source of program rationale, e.g., programs guided by studies of time-on-task (Wiley & Harnischfeger, 1974, Berliner et al., 1978), and the correlates of effective teaching (Anderson et al., 1978). In some cases, the practitioner's experience is considered critical for monitoring and revising programs as they are being implemented. Such programs (represented by many current inservice development efforts at Teacher Centers and elsewhere) tend to emphasize teachers' conscious reflection

	Intrinsic to the Classroom		External to the Classroom	
(a) Initial Sources of Knowledge for Program Development	Teaching Experience	Subject-Matter and Analysis of Learning Tasks	Empirical Research - survey - naturalistic - experimental - test outcome paradigms	Theories and Models - measurem't - psychology - sociology - economics etc.
(b) Working Sources of Knowledge for Program Implementation	Children	Curriculum Materials Instructional Practices Assessment Procedures	Parents Specialists Other Teachers and Administrators	

Figure I. A conception of educational programs in terms of knowledge sources

on and evaluation of their teaching experience (DeVaney & Thorn, 1975). Rarely, however, is knowledge intrinsic to the classroom regarded as a prime source for program development.

In contrast, program implementation necessarily depends on knowledge sources that are intrinsic to the classroom, particularly knowledge about students and their responses to curricular events and materials. While educational programs that purport to be teacher proof (even student proof), are being promoted--programs that claim to incorporate all the knowledge necessary for successful implementation--there is little empirical evidence or theoretical support for the feasibility or the pedagogical soundness of such programs. Students come to the classroom with differences in what they know and understand, and they differ too in their motivation, abilities and learning styles. Traditionally, teachers have been responsible for negotiating the terrain between their students' qualities and the demands of the learning tasks. The responsibility for this transaction cannot be assigned to anyone else, for information critical to carrying it out becomes available only during the course of instruction, when students' responses to curricular materials and activities become visible.

This conception of the teaching role implies that in addition to possessing substantive knowledge and mastery of their craft, teachers must attend to characteristics of their students. Knowledge of and about students thus forms an essential working source of knowledge for program implementation. A major, indispensable source of such knowledge are the actual instructional interactions between teachers and student, the exclusive locus of which is the classroom.

Although our conceptualization does not explicitly include teachers' expectations and perceptions as a source of knowledge, it is assumed that all the potential sources of knowledge are sifted through teachers' values, attitudes and beliefs; an amalgam of the teachers' understandings becomes translated into some form of action. Thus Figure I may be likened to a map of possible information territories available to the teacher and administrator. In fact, differences in the way teachers and administrators are likely to read and use the map is of interest, as it bears directly on the kind of knowledge that is required, and the way it is used, in fulfilling these two different educational functions.

Field Work

The evidential support for our conceptual analysis of knowledge use in reading programs comes from field studies in four urban public schools. These sites, and our procedures for gathering information about them, are described below. In addition, as supplemental material, we drew upon available data from two studies that had recently been completed by our research group at ETS. The more recent of these studies, an investigation of beginning reading, had drawn extensively upon teachers' knowledge that stems from sources intrinsic to the classroom.

Sites. The four schools that participated in the study had recently been involved in changing and/or modifying the reading program. The schools are located in large city systems and minority children constitute well over half the student population in each case. In selecting the schools we sought program variation with respect to curriculum materials and instructional methods, but our choices were equally guided by a search for differing patterns in administrative arrangements and hierarchies of control. That is, we sought sites that differed with respect to the authority of the central board over curriculum matters, and that also differed in expectations of teacher responsibilities. Our focus was upon the reading program within each site, but we sought to view the program as the arena within which patterns in knowledge use could be discerned. In the extended sense, the school - not the program - constitutes the unit of analysis, because the institutional structures of the site ultimately regulate the relationship between external knowledge sources and the working sources of each practitioner.

- School A is located in a major, New Jersey city and serves a mixed population of Black, Hispanic, White and recently settled Oriental children. The K-6th grade school has approximately 550 students, 28 teachers and 13 aides. The school is in the first year of implementing a consolidated Basic Skills program, which merges Title I and Compensatory Education efforts, hitherto implemented as separate programs.
- School B is located in a large city in Pennsylvania and has a predominantly Black student population. The grade range

extends from Kindergarten through fourth grade, with a pupil enrollment of about 1,000, a faculty of 31 teachers and 10-15 support/special staff. The program is built around two basal reading series that were selected by the school in accordance with District guidelines. Instruction must comply generally with the Board's outline of skills acquisition.

- School C is a large school with a staff of 25 teachers and a number of support personnel. It is located in a major Northeastern city, and serves a mixed population, Black, Hispanic and White. Its grades K through 6th are organized around combination classes (1-2, 3-4 & 5-6). Parent involvement in control of local schools is strong, as this particular district has sought to maintain decentralization reforms of the recent past. While the Central Board issues curriculum guidelines it does not prescribe instructional content. The Board does, however, set requirements (test scores) for pupil promotion at certain grade levels.
- School D is part of the same system as C but is located within a different district. It is a small school with 200 children, 7 classroom teachers and a number of special subject teachers; the student body is composed of Black, Hispanic and White children. In accord with district policy the School was established as one of the alternative programs offered as options to parents. The nature of the program was forged jointly by the principal and staff and is specifically advertised to parents as an alternative reading and language arts school.

Procedures for field work. The two principal investigators conducted all field work. A number of visits to each site, including the initial visit, were conducted as a team to ensure a dual perspective on the information being gathered. Our overall strategy in approaching schools was to enter initially at the 'middle' level of the hierarchy . . that of the principal. After gaining this view of the school we moved in two directions; either interviewing administrators at district levels

or teachers and reading specialists within the school. The bulk of the data collection effort was carried out in the spring of the school year; selected follow-up visits occurred in the fall in order to fill gaps in information or to obtain reactions to some of our preliminary interpretations of the spring data.

Interviews with school personnel were funnel shape in format, beginning with relatively open ended questions designed to elicit descriptions of salient features of the reading program, followed by more specific and focused probes. (See Appended Guidelines) In our interviews with staff we maintained a dual focus, one on knowledge used for program selection and the other on knowledge used as the point of departure for program implementation. What knowledge is invoked when decisions are made or justified, regarding core curricular materials, assessment systems, and goal statements? What knowledge is deemed essential by the staff in articulating and evaluating efforts, or describing ongoing practices and concerns? The interviews were not standardized but rather were modified as our familiarity with the dimensions of the program increased. The interview guidelines served primarily to guide the interviewer in directing the respondent's attention to areas of interest rather than as a formal routine for asking questions. Interviews were tape recorded, with durations ranging from 45 to 90 minutes. In each school the sample included the principal, the reading coordinator (and/or some other staff member with designated responsibilities for the reading program) and a cross section of teachers constituting about one-third of the faculty. For purposes of data analysis, protocols were prepared from each tape; these took the form of a running record of the respondent's comments. [See appended samples]

Although interviews were our initial and principle form of access to the program, other data sources were essential to the study. Informal classroom visits provided observational backup for most of the interviews with the teachers. At all sites, documents were collected as another supplementary source of information. These fell into several categories: public statements of school or district policies; internal memos, directives, etc; samples of commercial instructional materials that

figured prominently in a program. Also at each site we made it a point to observe meetings or workshops that involved the faculty on matters bearing on the implementation of the reading program. Finally, as a methodological tangent in the study, we explored the feasibility of using a performance task as an indicator of the practitioners' use of knowledge. In addition to being interviewed, three teachers and three reading specialists, were asked to respond to tape recorded samples of children reading aloud (copies of the child's text were provided). Using this as an approximation to an in-classroom data source, we asked what information they gained from such a sample, and how this information was or was not relevant to their practice.

Findings

In light of the conceptual, more than empirical character and goals of the study, we will present our findings in the form of themes, using the data gathered at the field sites illustratively, rather than as conclusive evidence. This format permits us to suggest hypotheses and to highlight understandings along a range of confidence--some are well based in our own and others' evidence, some are emergent insights that deserve fuller exploration. As a result, a few themes (below) are simply points of contact with the relevant literature, while others are more elaborated discussions of our observations and analyses.

I. Knowledge Use

The term "knowledge use" is itself problematic, lacking a commonly agreed upon definition, or a common referent in a distinct set of activities or processes. We found the definition of educational knowledge and its use as formulated by John Meyer (1981) of interest for our purposes, for it delineates the territory; he holds that educational knowledge consists of "assertions about the educational world having a cognitive character and some base in legitimation outside the educational organizational structure itself" and that knowledge use is "the employment in the educational system of externally validated knowledge." From our perspective, Meyer's formulation is usefully provocative, as it excludes

knowledge intrinsic to instructional interactions, the very knowledge that is pivotal to our own conception of knowledge that is required for effective instructional decisions.

II. Sources and Forms of Knowledge

Our initial conceptualization (Figure I) centered on sources of knowledge for curricular decisions, which we bifurcated into initial and working sources. However, differentiating educational knowledge solely as to its sources proved inadequate to a better understanding of the interplay of externally and internally generated knowledge in the service of curricular decisions; the form or type of knowledge guiding instructional choices proved an essential distinction as well. The latter distinction has been used in other attempts to characterize educational knowledge, most particularly by Huberman (1981), if with a somewhat different orientation. In our own case, identifying distinct forms of knowledge that were used to define the programs at the different sites proved a central finding with suggestive theoretical and practical implications. (See Discussion in Section IV.)

III. Knowledge Sources

The school sites did not differ in the total array of knowledge sources they drew on in implementing their reading program. All sites used published curriculum materials, had State and local guidelines, etc. There were clear differences, however, in the amount of knowledge that emanated from these sources, and the weight and import of their influence on the program. In two of the sites the locus of program decisions was closer to the top of the organizational hierarchy, i.e., the district. These schools tended to receive more communications (such as directives and curriculum materials) regarding the reading program from that source, and paid greater heed to them. The other two schools were more autonomous vis a vis the district; the volume of materials emanating from the district was generally lower and often stopped at the level of the principal, not passed on directly to the teachers. Elaborate curriculum guides that were issued by the district were known to teachers, and often present in their rooms, but not apparently used.

IV. Discussion: Forms of Knowledge

Although knowledge sources guiding instructional decisions from some sources proved differentially influential across the four sites, of greater interest were the differences in the forms of knowledge that we found to distinguish the sites' programs. The knowledge form of a reading program has direct consequences, we believe, upon the assistance teachers require in implementing a program and upon their ability to capitalize upon knowledge sources intrinsic to the teaching experience . . i.e., knowledge about pupils. This section of the report expands upon these findings.

Procedural-Theoretical Knowledge. The knowledge base of a reading program as implemented in a school may be formulated at two levels; one procedural, the other 'theoretical.' Procedural knowledge gives emphasis to the techniques of teaching . . to the routines and specific methods that are part of a reading program. It responds to the what-to-do and how-to-do-it side of teaching by providing guidance and/or directives for carrying out the course of everyday instruction. Theoretical knowledge, by contrast, assumes the form of principles, maxims and precepts about the ways that teachers teach or that children learn. Whether stated explicitly or held implicitly, this latter form of knowledge presumably imparts direction and maintains underlying purpose to the more procedural aspects of the program.

Both forms of knowledge can be ultimately practical. That is, they provide teachers a framework for making the kinds of decisions that are inevitably required for implementation of any program. Each teacher, in effect, acts upon and transforms such knowledge into the reality of a particular classroom version of the reading program, with a particular group of children. The line of demarcation between theory and procedure is obviously not a hard and fast one, as the two forms appear to stand in a figure-ground relationship. When the what-to-do is emphasized by a practitioner (or described in a manual) the questions of underlying rationale and purpose may recede or be ignored altogether. Conversely, when the assumptive base of a program is highlighted, the more tangible surface aspects of instruction may be unspecified, unclear; rationale, after all, does not respond to the question of "what do I do on Monday?"

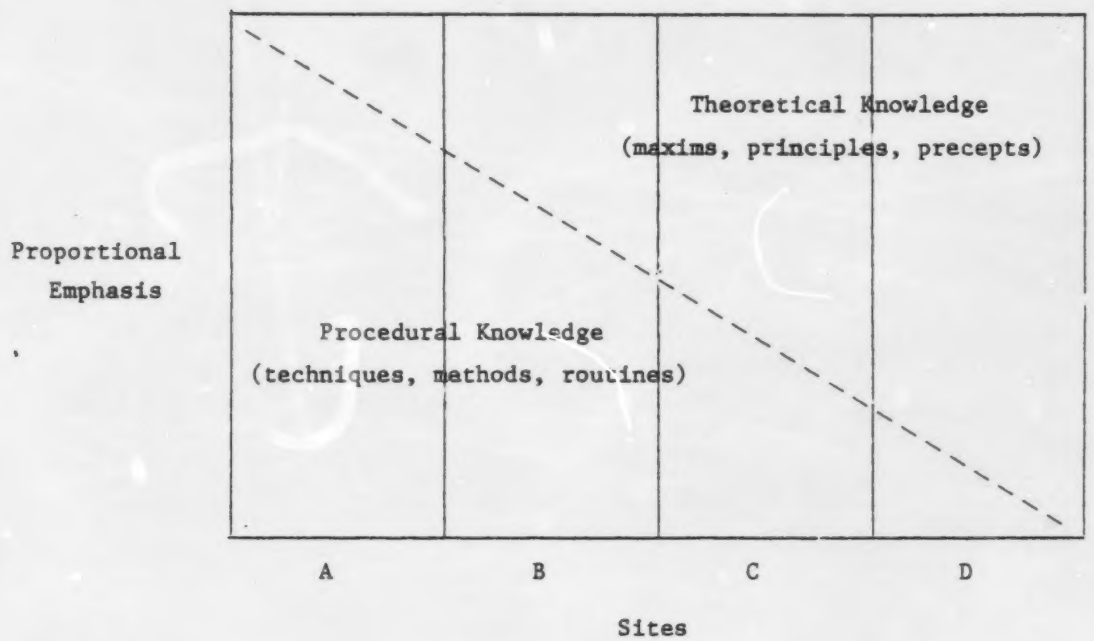
In Figure II, the distinction between the procedural and theoretical faces of a reading program is schematically portrayed. The diagonal which separates the two knowledge forms is represented by an open line in order to emphasize the fact that the distinction is not a sharply drawn one. Figure II also shows how the four different programs can be located along a continuum defined as the relative predominance of knowledge form. In Site A, for example, interviews with staff and observations of school routines, point to a program being implemented from a knowledge base of a highly procedural nature; while Site D, at the other pole, presents a program derived from educational principles and rhetoric. Unlike A, the working definition of D's program is not to be found at the level of routines and materials. Sites B and C fall somewhere between these extremes. In B, a core set of materials and procedures is mandated, but these may be modified according to variations in teacher analyses and interpretations. In C, the program's guidelines are couched in theory, but much of the staff's attention centers upon questions of procedural translation of such guidelines. These conditions in B and C have a moderating effect upon dominant knowledge form.

Site portraits. The differences among sites with respect to the procedural/theoretical bases of their reading programs, are documented in the portraits below. The hierarchial organization of decision making is also indicated.

Site A. At Site A, the reading program had been adopted at the district level and prescribed for all elementary schools. Two commercial reading series are endorsed. One, a basal series (already in use in a number of schools, including A) to be used with children at or above grade level; the other, a newly adopted "Remedial Program" for children below level (about 60% of the pupils in A). Pupils are homogeneously grouped for reading instruction, based primarily on scores from tests, although there is some allowance for teacher recommendation. Pupils in the basal strand are taught by regular classroom teachers; those in the remedial strand are taught by special teachers, most of whom were trained as reading specialists under previous Title I programs. The grouping of pupils, the sequence of materials, and the schedule of

Figure II

Schema: Forms of Knowledge given Emphasis in Reading Programs



reading instruction is uniform across the district. The District coordinator regards such uniformity as an improvement over the looseness of previous years when "there was no continuity in either materials or instructional approach . . . just the philosophy that teachers should have a wide range of materials to choose from."

In either strand, the reading lesson typically adheres to the procedures set forth in the materials. In discussing the basal program, a classroom teacher noted, "We are bound to follow the program we've been given . . . It's taught with phonics, all phonics . . In the beginning it's all initial sounds. We go in order, f, b, w, g, n." The teacher's manual for the Remedial Program is very explicit concerning steps to be followed. For example, a lesson on word analysis supplies the teacher with questions, verbatim, as well as with answers.

> "What sound do you hear at the end of girls? (/z/)
>
> "What do you remember about the sounds s can stand for?
>
> (It can stand for /s/ or /z/.)

The teachers, for the most part, adhere closely to procedural requirements and stipulations; several of them approve the movement toward greater procedural clarity. "Before, we never had a solid series . . we had a little Ginn, a little A-B-C. Now we have workbooks, dittoes, everything we need. The books themselves are good . . a firm way of presenting . . you can just skim right through it. After all, teachers can't be creative all the time; you'd be up all night." A few teachers sought to modify the program in significant ways. One teacher, for example, departed from the steady diet of basal stories by having children bring in their favorite books on certain days. She observed that she and the pupils "were getting bored with so much basal work." Although this modification represented a clear alteration of procedures, it was nonetheless acceptable to the originators (publishers) of the program. The teacher explains:

> At a workshop, some teachers raised concern of too much time on the basals. The person representing the reading series suggested that some time be set aside for literature, and that teachers did not always need to stay with basals. Although most of the teachers are leary of departing from

> the series (due to the principal's and parents' expectations) I decided to commit myself to one free reading day a week . . regardless of whether everything got covered.

The principal, who is responsible for overseeing program implementation, supports its sequential regularity, believing that children should learn the skills in a set order. He felt too that this way of teaching made it more possible for him to form judgments concerning children's progress.

Criticism of the program, when voiced by some of the administrative staff and certain teachers, had more to do with its "pull-out" aspects than with the instructional content per se. The severest critic pointed out that the 'top' children stayed with the classroom teacher, while the 'bottom' children were pulled out and sent to special teachers . . "the very children who most need continuity (of instruction) from one person."

Site B. In Site B, the choice of a basal reading program is made at the building level, although all selections must comply with the list of approved materials published by the Central Board. Two reading series have been adopted by the school. The main series, a phonics approach, is used at the outset with all children. The second series, a word recognition emphasis, constitutes a back-up system for those children (perhaps 25-30% of the student population) who exhibit substantial difficulty in dealing with the phonics program. The two series are mandatory for all classrooms; the rationale underlying this requirement being partly logistical:

> If everyone starts off the same way, it's easier to go to the alternatives later . . . I guess we require the main series for the ease of running the school, since children are always changing classes and have to be fitted in. If it was a smaller school then we might do it differently. (Administrator)

One of the main duties of the school's reading specialist is to monitor the pace at which children move through the series, and to oversee teachers' decisions to shift pupils from one series to another. The specialist individually tests every child in the school at least once or twice during the year. Then, in consultation with the teacher, a decision is made whether to move the child ahead, or into supplementary work.

> We always discuss it . . and usually come to agreement. The teacher knows the child. Usually my testing and the teacher's opinion agree . . my testing helps and confirms the teacher's. (Reading Sepcialist)

Although choice of particular programs is made at the building level, the conduct of program implementation is constrained by the District in two important respects. First, a specific sequence of skills instruction must be followed, regardless of the basal series being used; second, the children must be tested periodically for attainment of these skills. The sequence for skill attainment is stated explicitly: for example, the District's statement of pupil competencies stipulates learning objectives in the following behavioral terms:

The pupil understands and uses the following word analysis elements:

a. Final consonant digraphs including ng

b. Vowels: short and long. etc.

The District also produces criterion referenced tests that are used for monitoring skill acquisition. The reading specialist assists teachers in assessing pupil progress in compliance with the District requirements.

The policies of the District, and the fact that the basal series are mandated, mean that all classrooms share a common set of materials and procedures. Nevertheless, there is considerable variation among staff in how they go about the process and in the extent to which the "official" program actually forms the base of classroom practice. Concerning stylistic differences, school policies allow and foster considerable leaway in classroom climate and formality/informality of approach.

> A variety of teaching methods are used since both teacher and child thrive in an environment best suited to them. One of the school's strengths is this variety and parents have a choice, whenever possible, as to what teaching environment they would like for their child. All teachers, however, stress the basic skills, no matter what classroom methods they use. (excerpt from a Handbook for parents.)

Concerning program content differences, the basal materials and procedures essentially define the scope of the program for some teachers, while for others these materials constitute an accepted core on which to build a number of activities. Finally, for a few teachers, the basals represent a minor element in their practice, since the central component of their reading program resides elsewhere:

> I set time aside for formal (basal) reading instruction, about 15 minutes a day. That's when I use the series stuff. When I run out of time, it's usually the first thing that goes . . . The time when children really learn to read in my classroom is during sustained reading (children using wide assortment of self-selected books.) In itself, it is a reading program, and lasts about 30-45 minutes.

Such variation in teacher practice, maintained within the boundaries of District and building-level requirements, is made possible in large part by the reading specialist in School B. In addition to her duties of monitoring pupil progress, she offers teachers material support and counsel on a range of matters related to reading instruction. Many teachers note the usefulness of this practical assistance . . . "the reading teacher is the one to go to if you want to know what materials to use to teach a specific skill." In addition to providing technical knowledge the specialist may also help teachers approach problems more reflectively . . "When teachers come into my room (resource room) they'll say they're looking for materials to help them with something, but often you can tell what the underlying question is."

Site C. In Site C, the formulation and implementation of the reading program are the responsibilities of the school, with the principal taking the role of the instructional leader. Although under the jurisdiction of a District Board, the school has maintained considerable autonomy as a result of an active parent body and a good reputation for academic achievement. While instructional matters are largely under local, school control, there is less control over testing and pupil promotion. The reading program at School C presumes that teacher observations of children's behaviors and work are the primary data for pupil appraisal, while the Board ascribes such authority to test scores.

The program is defined primarily in terms of its theoretical orientations, and is thus characterized by staff as an 'approach' more than a 'method.' There are no mandated classroom materials or practices; instead, the teachers are responsible for developing the procedural features of the program according to the needs and capabilities of the children within the particular classroom. For example, working from their own budget allocations, teachers purchase their own instructional materials. In the same vein, teachers are responsible for selecting and developing classroom schedules, practices and activities which best fit their situation. While many teachers make selective use of commerical instructional schemes, there is relatively little uniformity on this matter across the classrooms. Those schemes or basal materials that are purchased are chosen more for their convenience than on the assumption that they represent a 'best' method.

> My beginners use Bank Street supplementary readers. They enjoy them, the stories are short. Truthfully, I don't think it makes any difference if they read Dick and Jane and Spot or something else. It's the enthusiasm that counts. [Teacher]

> I don't have a reading 'program' . . it's antithetical to my feeling about language and what happens to young people when they read. So I don't use a basal reader . . use a variety of trade books instead. [Teacher]

While teacher autonomy on procedural matters is a basic policy of the school, the program is not "eclectic," nor is it the case that teachers may teach reading any way they choose. Rather, their task is one of implementing classroom practices that are consonant, at the level of rationale, with the school's orientation.

> The principal sets up guides, lets you know what he would like to see, but does not tell you how to do it. [Teacher]

Overall, the theoretical approach of the program is characterized as 'psycholinguistic' and disavows a skills hierarchy . . that is, it places the task of learning to read within the larger context of language development. Arguing for this position, the principal cites both research literature and personal experience of observing children . . "which make

me feel that basically reading does develop as part of language. We don't know what readers actually process and how, and thus it seems better to try to understand what the reader is doing and to help them along rather than insist upon some sequence of skills." All forms of children's linguistic resources are considered relevant to the reading program . . writing, speaking, listening, and communication through the arts. In a memorandum submitted by the principal and faculty to district offices, the program's features were summarized as follows:

> Based on a belief that reading is an integral part of language development, our school has created a reading surround in which the creation and extension of language is continuously supported. Our school structure and flexibility motivates continuous sharing among children, among teachers and between classes. There is intensive support of children's writing which is displayed, shared . . communication and extensive use of language has become an integral part of our schools' organization. [School Document]

Institutional provisions, of several kinds, are available to help teachers with the task of program implementation. Classrooms are grouped into corridor communities, each community containing several adjacent grade levels. Children will customarily stay within that corridor, moving from grade to grade, during their elementary school career and the teachers are expected to work together to evolve a coherent program and to be of mutual assistance. As another form of assistance, the Assistant Principal acts as a reading coordinator, providing guidance for program development and practical advice. Her role is especially important to new teachers. The principal also acts in an advisory capacity and regularly visits classrooms. Finally, special faculty meetings and workshops are scheduled that are addressed to substantive matters . . to theoretical and practical issues in teaching.

Site D. The school in Site D is one of several alternative elementary schools within the District, each offering a distinctive program, and each available as an option to parents. The school started out as a kindergarten/primary program, but has grown to include upper grades and

a classroom for four-year-olds. It is portrayed to the community as an alternative that features the development of literacy and the language arts. The principal has provided the leadership in the school's founding and plays the key role in articulating its rationale and program framework. Because it is an alternative school, the staff . . chosen by the principal . . is composed of teachers who sought the position and who thus subscribe to the general orientation of the program. The status of 'alternative' also means that the school has considerable leaway in curriculum development, provided that the rationale is well worked out and, as the principal remarks, "the test scores are not terribly low."

The program's basic tenent is that "reading is always an act of understanding." Therefore, the meaning of reading and the child's efforts to make sense from print must always be given primacy over modes of instruction, such as phonics lessons, that draw attention away from meaning.

> I'm not against supplying children with information about words, provided it's not done as an attempt to teach them rules. Fluent readers learn rules unconsciously, and to try to teach them directly is usually not very helpful. (Principal)

In this view, learning to read is essentially a matter of practice and of being involved in the act of reading....with books that hold substantial content and interest. For this reason, the classrooms are well stocked with trade books; basal readers and workbooks are not in evidence.

Given the value placed upon understanding and meaning, the program is also characterized by an emphasis upon field trips, projects, and activities in arts and sciences, the substance of which may become the focus of children's reading and writing.

> I always try to have on hand a large number of books on any of the topics we are studying. When children are working on some project, I want them to go to the books for more than just a particular piece of information. I want them to see the information opening up to them. [Teacher]

The orientation of the program has been codified in a brochure for parents that was prepared by the principal and one of the teachers. In

addition to setting forth a definition of reading, the document provides an outline of three major stages of learning to read and offers a description of behavioral indications of children's progress. The pamphlet stresses the fact that the particular age at which a child reaches a stage is not in itself significant:

> Children go through these stages at varying speeds . . Like walking or talking, the age at which mastery is achieved is not important. But becoming a self-confident master is.

The teachers' autonomy in developing classroom practice is respected. Much of the principal's work with parents and district administrators is intended to protect and expand the scope of teacher decision making. Teachers are expected to transform the orientation of the reading program into a particular version best suited to their style and to their pupils. When a difference arises, between principal and a staff member, concerning instructional matters, it may well be over the question of whether a specific practice (e.g., a phonics lesson) is compatible with programmatic premises. Teachers obtain help from each other as well as from the principal, but for the most part teachers work through the task of implementation on their own.

Knowledge Forms: Translation into Classroom Practice. As depicted in the portraits above, the reading programs in two sites (A and B) are grounded on a procedural knowledge base while programs in the other two sites (C and D) grow out of theoretical orientations. However, the sites divide themselves differently on the question of assisting teachers with program implementation. In B and C provisions for helping teachers translate and modify program knowledge are institutionalized; in A and D the staff are expected to work from a knowledge base presented in more or less 'raw' form.

In B, the reading specialist assumes the crucial role of mediating between the uniform procedural mandates of the program and the circumstances facing individual teachers in carrying out responsibilities for particular children. The specialist leavens the procedural knowledge embedded in curriculum materials by assisting teachers with adaptation to special cases,

and by providing rationale, on occasion, for altering program features. The specialist, in effect, supplies principles and theoretical support for decision making and thus opens the door to the better use of knowledge gained from student behavior. In Site C, colleagues in the "corridor communities" and the reading coordinator promote exchange of procedural and practical ideas that complement the abstract theoretical base of the program. Specific suggestions about ways to assess children, about uses of materials, etc. are typically discussed in one-to-one encounters between staff, as well as during faculty meetings when both the principal and reading coordinator take the lead in discussing substantive questions of program implementation.

In effect, the roles of the specialist and the coordinator in sites B and C are similar; each provides the means and at the same time the legitimation for the 'translation' of initial program knowledge into workable instruction. Although their function is the same, what they in fact do is rather different. In B such assistance modifies an essentially prescriptive program in the direction of greater flexibility and responsiveness to knowledge about individuals pupils. In C, the assistance has the effect of moving the program . . originally defined as an 'approach' . . toward somewhat greater uniformity of method.

In A and D, the 'extreme' schools in Figure II, teachers are expected to work through questions of program implementation more or less on their own. In A, the program directives and teacher's manuals are sufficiently explicit that little ongoing help with 'translation' is deemed necessary, and modification of procedures is the exception rather than the rule. In D, the facts that staff were self-selected and that the school is small mitigate the need for a designated program 'coordinator.' In any event, supervision and 'cordination' of program implementation in A and D tend to have the effect of ensuring adherence to the initial knowledge base . . whether procedural as in A or ideological as in D. In B and C, by contrast, the coordination appears to soften rather than harden the initial contours of the program.

Forms of Program Knowledge and the Teachers' Use of In-classroom Sources

All teachers, regardless of program, are faced with differences in student response to instruction and with the fact that the teaching/learning endeavor is an interactive undertaking. Just as each teacher ultimately translates the program knowledge, so each pupil responds by imposing his or her own meanings and interpretations. Thus knowledge of students, derived from observations of pupil responses and from assessment of learning, constitutes the essential working source for the teacher. Information about pupils which is generated during actual instruction is intrinsic to the teaching experience. The teacher's ability to profit from this source determines ultimately how adequately the program will be implemented. It must be integrated with knowledge from sources external to the classroom for a productive educative process to occur.

The evidence from interviews and informal observations points to several classroom situations that recur as settings in which teachers may observe pupil responses. These within-classroom settings, as outlined in Table I, can be differentiated according to the degree of constraints placed upon pupil behavior. For example, teachers may derive information from noting children's activity in relatively open situations of play or during transition from one classroom routine to another (Setting #1). And by contrast, they also derive information from children's responses to workbook assignments (#5) and to items on a reading test (#6) where the ranges of appropriate behaviors are much narrower. In general, the use of information from restricted settings was more commonly reported, and more highly valued in Sites A and B, while the less constraining situations were relatively more important to practitioners in C and D. It should be emphasized, however, that the settings themselves occur, to one degree or another, in all elementary classrooms. Moreover most teachers across programs relied principally upon a combination of three situations: performance of reading (#3), responses to group lessons/activities (#4) and responses to specific tasks (#5). Language arts activities (#2) were also important to many, especially in Sites C and D. The remaining two settings, informal contexts (#1) and testing (#6) are also endemic to all schools, but they tend to be regarded as supplementary rather than

Table I: Classroom Settings for Deriving Knowledge about Pupils

(1) Children's behaviors in informal situations.

Play; transitions between lessons or activities; informal discussions

Note: While these settings are peripheral to formal instruction, they nonetheless may yield information about pupil interests, attitudes, etc.

(2) Children's behavior in "language arts" activities.

Writing/dictating stories; listening, speaking; constructing projects or reports

(3) Reading performance of individual children.

Oral reading; discussion with a child about a book; response to questions on comprehension of material

Note: The social context may be one-to-one or teacher may interact with a particular child within the reading group situation.

(4) Children's responses to group lessons.

Indications of interest/understanding of the lesson being presented by the teacher to a group or whole class, e.g., child raises hand, volunteers answer.

Note: These tend to be whole class activities. Attention of the teacher may be upon collective patterns of response rather than upon an individual.

(5) Children's response to specific, 'reading' tasks.

Workbook assignments; responses to letter-sound exercises; underlining key words, etc.

Note: These assignments may be taken from commercial materials or developed by the teacher. The information they yield tends to be couched in terms of accuracy of response.

(6) Children's response to tests.

Tests embedded within the basal reading program; teacher made tests; end-of-unit quizzes; standardized reading tests.

primary sources to the extent that they were drawn upon for the reading instruction.

The teachers' observations of children's behaviors are bounded by the parameters of the reading program. Program characteristics place differential value upon the several settings as potential sources of relevant information. Thus, behaviors in the more open settings (1, 2 and 3) that necessarily require greater interpretation on the teacher's part are more commonly referred to by teachers in the theoretical orientations of C and D, while pupil response in the more restrictive settings (4, 5 and 6) are given more credence by teachers in the procedural programs of A and B. Regardless of settings, teachers in all sites necessarily observe children and interpret their responses through the template of program goals and procedures. In the five excerpts below, it is the child's reaction to some established procedure or routine that provides feedback to teachers regarding the 'mesh' between program and pupil.

> (Informal situations) Readiness? "I notice the children who are eager to do tasks, who work well independently . . who bring information from the newspaper. Or perhaps the child is less mature. For example, if we're having a discussion about the weather and the child pipes up with something about his grandmother."
>
> (Reading performance) "I also listen to them read and make notes about mistakes they've made. I notice if the child is able to make reasonable guesses in context. Or whether they're so burdened with sounding out that I need to take them away from the linguistic readers."
>
> (Group lesson context) How do you evaluate progress? "When we're discussing a story, if a child doesn't raise his hand that tells me he's not comprehending. When I spot check them - ask them to prove their answers or find something in the text and they can't skim."
>
> (Specific 'reading' tasks) I spend time in the beginning, seeing if they know alphabet and sounds and can go on to the phonetic program. Usually, if they don't know their letters, they won't know their sounds. For example, if I say "bat," they have to circle the sound, b. If they don't know this sort of thing we can't go on.
>
> (Tests) In the fall each child is given the Prescriptive Reading Inventory by the teacher. Later, we are sent results of the test scores. I'm supposed to teach those areas where the child shows up

> poorly on the test . . where the child has not been taught. For example, an area may be initial sounds . . child might need to be taught 'b.' or 'd,' or 's.'

Pupil behavior, in a sense, is a litmus indicator which signals whether instruction is proceeding too quickly, too slowly or whether the material is too difficult or too easy. Are pupils confused, bored or interested? While teachers differ in their sensitivity to such signals, all teachers use such information to monitor program implementation . . . to keep the program on course. .to seek a suitable match between program expectations and the particular pupils under their charge.

Although pupil reactions to program features (as in examples above) may provide the predominant source of feedback, such signals in themselves to not necessarily suggest solutions to questions of program adaptation when problems arise. The facts that a pupil "doesn't know the sound of b" or "doesn't raise his hand" contain little information that point to appropriate instructional action. To meet this latter need, teachers require knowledge about pupils that goes beyond the litmus reaction and that looks to children as potential sources for program modification. At such junctures, children's interests, understandings and ideas, less constrained by program boundaries, need to be taken into account. Most important, to incorporate such information into instructional action teachers need to understand the rationale of the program, and to hold some theoretical framework for evaluating the situation. Lacking rationale, teachers' ability to consider the significance of the problem or to contemplate alternative solutions may be severely restricted. If a pupil doesn't know b, is the deficit to be regarded as severe or trivial? The hazard of an inflexible procedural program (Site A) is that the teacher becomes boxed in by the method as in the fourth example above in which the child's ignorance of b brings a halt to reading instruction. At such junctures, the limitations of procedural knowledge are reached. By contrast in the example below, the teacher confidently bypasses a procedural requirement in order to meet the individual case, invoking theoretical knowledge in support of her action.

> If a child becomes too much of a rule follower...and, there's usually a few every year...who spends time sounding out words so that it interferes with their reading, I'll switch them into completely different material, to get their attention on meaning. Maybe the Monster books, or fairy tales, or just tell them to pretend to read. While it's convenient for teachers to have some common basal material, from the child's point of view it doesn't really matter at all which books to start with.

Administrative Structures and Knowlege Forms

The four sites exemplify a variety of organizational and control patterns regarding program decisions; their differences in use of knowledge appear related both to the prevailing organizational arrangements and to the form of knowledge that is needed and can be handled at the several levels of the hierarchy.

Teachers, closest to the actual instructional process, both need and have best access to knowledge sources internal to the classroom. The degree to which they incorporate such knowledge into their instructional decisions is a function of knowledge base of the program and the locus of program decisions. In Schools A and B, where the nature of the reading program was determined at the district level, the use of classroom based information was relatively low; it was better used in School B, where it was sanctioned by the reading specialist, who mediated the district program at the school level. In the two schools enjoying considerable autonomy, (Schools C and D), program decision originated at the building level, and the teachers considered information about their students necessary to ongoing instructional decisions. This information, in the case of School C, was more predictably tied to particular instructional practices, as a reading coordinator served to reduce the variability of teaching approaches across classrooms.

Principals, at the next level of the hierarchy, were responsible to knowledge claims from external sources, but also had the opportunity to incorporate information from the classroom into their decision process.

The principals with discretion over program decisions (in Schools C and D) assumed both administrative and instructional functions through their active participation in program decisions. These principals relied on knowledge from both internal and external sources, acquiring familiarity with individual classrooms and students but responding to the district as well, which required information aggregated across the schools. The role of the principals in Schools A and B, where the district arrogated the critical program decisions, was largely administrative, and they needed classroom based information less often. Thus the options that inhere in the principals' role regarding the balance of teaching and administrative functions were influenced by the organizational structure prevailing in their district.

These options, however, are not available to district administrators. The scope of their responsibility dictates reliance on knowledge external to classroom interaction and calls for information in highly compacted form, to reflect school practices or performance across the district. Unlike the principal, who may construe his/her role to include teaching responsibilities, the district administrator has neither interest in, nor a way of making use of information intrinsic to the classroom.

With these distinctions in mind, the particular class of knowledge that constitutes the initial source for programs in the two pairs of schools does not appear fortuitous. A prescriptive program, built on a predominantly procedural knowledge base, characterized decision patterns made centrally, at some distance from the instructional process itself, while programs based on general principles and values were adapted in locally controlled schools. While it is conceivable that procedural knowledge could undergird programs formulated at the building level, it is more likely that a centrally controlled program would rest on such grounds, because a curriculum built on theoretical principles and ideological assumptions leaves a great deal of discretion in the teacher's hands, resisting centrally controlled implementation. Local autonomy, on the other hand, permits the principal to monitor and otherwise guide the realization of broad principles. It is no coincidence, we believe, that

in the more autonomous schools the principals were actively involved in overseeing the reading program. In these schools, they perforce acquired knowledge intrinsic to the classroom, either by direct observation, or from the teachers. In the centrally controlled schools where procedural knowledge guided teaching, the principals were a good deal more distant from the day-to-day process of implementation, confining their interest largely to evidence that the procedures such as grouping and scheduling of students were implemented and that mandated materials and activities were used.

The conception of classroom instruction presented earlier in this paper claims that information about students, as revealed only during the course of instruction, is an indispensible ingredient of productive teaching. The growing national trend toward selecting and controlling curricular programs, which minimize the role of this source of knowledge, raises concerns about consequences of this strategy for development of teacher competence.

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APPENDIX A

Guidelines for Interviews

Study of Knowledge Use in Schools

Amarel - Chittenden
Educational Testing Service
March 1981

Guidelines for Teacher Interview

General purpose: To understand what knowledge/information the teacher uses to formulate her reading program, and what information/knowledge is used to adapt it to particular students in a particular classroom setting. The interview begins with the description of the reading program, then moves through several aspects of the program where instructional decisions are called for. The sources of knowledge that are considered in making decisions are probed, along with the evaluation of the utility and relevance of the knowledge they offer.

Description of reading program in classroom:

- principal features
- origin and evolution
- stability/current changes

Instructional materials:

- acquisition of materials, who decides, what procedures used
- source of information about new materials, for replacement, enrichment
- assessment of curricular materials--what information, what process used
- consequences of assessment--can materials be changed, replaced, kept

Assessment of pupil progress:

- information base for assessment--tests scores, teacher observations, etc.
- relative importance of various information sources of pupil progress
- variety of knowledge sources for assessing progress
- differential utility of various knowledge sources (tests for grading, observations for instructional decisions)
- weight of teacher evaluation in school level decisions

Supports for reading program within school:

- other teachers--informal or regularized professional interaction
- specialists, advisors, etc.
- administrative support, input
- giving support to others

External supports to program:

- in-service programs, course offerings, workshops
- articulated, mandated practices, goals

Parents role in reading program:

- in class assistance
- input into program goals, practices
- political force in district

Teacher input into school level decisions:

- assigning students to classrroms
- recommendations for special programs

Study of Knowledge Use in Schools

Amarel - Chittenden
Educational Testing Service
March 1981

Guidelines for Principal Interview

General purpose: To understand what information/knowledge the principal uses in making decisions about the reading program in the school; what are the sources of knowledge that feed into the implementation, evaluation, and modification of the reading program.

The interview is organized into two parts. Part I focuses on the description of the reading program. Part II seeks to identify the sources of input that the principal uses in implementing, maintaining, and changing the program.

I. Questions concerning the nature of the reading program in the school:

Degree of program variation in school--is there a unified program across the whole school, several distinct programs or program components

Are program variations student or teacher related--are they attributed to differences in the way teachers teach, or different approaches designed for differently classified students

Official literature about program--who prepared it, who reads or uses it, how is it intended

Curricular materials--how are they chosen, how uniform across the school. Do the curricular materials constitute the program, or are they one of the means to implement it

Grouping practices--who decides, what information used in decision

Communication patterns between principal and teachers--what forms does it take, what substance is discussed

Communication patterns among teachers--does it relate to nature and implementation of the reading program

Role of specialist teachers--do they work in support of, and collaboration with classroom teachers, or are they "experts" working independently with selected children

Zone of decision-making principal exercizes over reading program--what form does it take, what aspects of the program does it affect

II. Questions concerning the sources of knowledge/information that determine/influence the nature of the reading program:

School Board input--goal statements, curricular materials, learning expectations, testing practices, etc.

District input--all of the above, specialists, in-service programs, etc.

School level input--materials, parents, teachers (as a group) principal, etc.

For each of the input sources, probe:

- how is it presented, communicated
- which aspects seem mandatory, which optional, at teacher or principal discretion
- which aspects of program most relevant, most useful, which monitored as a way to assess value of program
- what knowledge, what information is used in evaluating and making changes in reading program

General probes, whenever appropriate:

In making changes, modifying programs or practices--what knowledge/ information used

Nature of information flow between different levels of school system-- Board, district, school, classroom--differences in types of knowledge/ information that is considered appropriate, or used in decision making

In case of contradictions between knowledge sources (test results and teacher observation) which given value in what decisions

APPENDIX B

Samples: Teacher Interviews from Four Sites

Sample: Teacher Interview, Site A

Describe features of your reading program? This year we've divided children into six groups: the basic skills teachers take the three lowest groups and the top three groups go to the other fourth grade teachers. So each have one of the highest groups. We each have about 15 kids - I have 16.

We have a solid hour to work with one group. We don't have to worry about giving the other children seat work to do, or games - there's no noise. The kids can pay attention. I like the Bookmark program.

The 16 children you have are all one level? We take them from all 3 grades. We all read from 11:30 - 12:30. Mine are at the beginning of fourth grade book - they're the second group. The top group has finished the fourth grade book. It's good for us; I don't know if it's good for the basic skills teachers, but they have few children. But it just so happens that this year the lowest group, which is the first grade level, she has 14 children. That's a very difficult group.

Couldn't you make some changes? The regular teacher doesn't have too much to say about Basic Skills. Who goes or how they're going to arrange their groups.

How do you decide on groups? We test them - use inventory at the beginning of the year. We use the Suchert Allred (exclusively this year - administration dictated).

Can you do something if the test is under-estimating or over-estimating? Well, it's a pretty good test in that you start them where they scored in their last year's test and then you can go back if they don't do well at that level. The inventory starts at primer and goes up to 6th grade. Those are the three considerations: the standard tests, the Suchert-Allred and then you can also give them the other inventory (this year we didn't).

You started to say there were some features in the new program that you liked? Before we never had a solid series that we used for every reading group - we had a little Ginn, a little A-C. I didn't have workbooks or materials. Now we have workbooks, dittos, everything we need. The books themselves are good - has a good firm way of presenting you can just skim right through it. (Teachers can't be creative all the time - you'd be up all night.) This year we have a new series that is easier for 4th, 5th and 6th graders. With a solid hour I can pace myself to make it through the entire book by the end of the year.

System has purchased a lot of supplemental materials to go with the book.

You said the revisions are nice - They're easy. If I haven't read the story beforehand, the answers are right there. Before I'd have to read it 3 or 4 times to make sure I knew the answers.

Did teachers take part in decision to order the new series? Seven years ago - no.

Can you order materials? Last year we got $400 to order workbooks, textbooks, dittos and teacher's manuals. At the upper levels can't buy much more than that. We have a certain amount of money left and I might buy games, or materials to make games for reading, e.g., Dolch vocabulary words, prefix and suffix cards. That would come out of supplies - not book money.

How familiar are you with the text from the 'basic skills' group? I borrowed one from one of the other teachers and I thought it was difficult for first graders. I looked at the teacher's manual and I didn't think it was convenient to use - just the way they had it set up. Harcourt is extremely convenient, any one can come in off the street and teach a lesson.

In addition to the 5 minute period, reading goes on at other times of the day too. There's spelling and language - in social studies, science and math. Everything has reading. I have 2 spelling groups, only one language group - they all seem able to handle the workbooks.

How do evaluate progress or difficulty? When we're discussing a story, if a child doesn't raise his hand that tells me he's not comprehending. When I spot check them - ask them to prove their answers or find something in the text and they can't skim. There's tests we can give.

How about standardized tests? We get information in June and they score on level I was teaching. I don't use it that much. The Suchert-Allred test is just for placement.

Did you have workshops with representatives of the Reading Series? Yes. I remember a woman coming and explaining a good lesson. If you have 2 or 3 groups, how you would get around it.

The pull - out program, how is it different this year? It's more organized. Before, I had two groups and then another. Disadvantages? For the Basic Skills teachers - they have the lower groups and it's tough.

Communication with Basic Skills Teachers? Not unless there's a behavior problem. I don't get to know children as well as I used to - when I had 4 or 5 small groups.

Inservice workshops? We've had a lot of workshops on objectives which were (to me) inane. We've been over to review some of the different series - I reviewed three, (Ginn, Rey) but I liked Harcourt better. Children who have failed already shouldn't get the same text again, so they will get a co-basal. I'm pretty sure it's going to be the Key text.

At the beginning of year how are 30 children placed? Look in their folder to see how they scored on standardized test. Then we were told to use the individual test. There are 3 indicators: frustration level, instructional level and independent level. Mostly we're looking for instructional level. Then we decide who is going to teach which group, and the Basic Skills teachers decide among themselves.

Is there ever a discrepancy between test scores? I had a girl who tested very well, but in the group she couldn't answer questions or handle the workbook. I took her out and now she's in an even lower level. Before Basic Skills would take her, they tested her again and the same thing happened. She tested on a 4-1. She definitely has emotional problems, very shy. She's doing fine there.

Do you ever see the reverse? That's much more common - maybe it's nervousness about the tests. Can change assignment, but it's difficult getting children into Basic Skills. There is movement, but not that common.

How do you commmunicate with parents? We send papers home and they come in for conferences. Children have assignments. Parents don't play an active role. We might send a letter home if children are doing poorly.

Sample: Teacher Interview, Site B

Give me an overall picture of your reading program. We have two programs. We lean heavily on Lippincott which is basically a phonetic approach and doesn't stress comprehension as much. Has a workbook and masters that go with it. Also we use Bank Street, which is a sight word approach. Comparing the two - Bank Street is easier approach - level 5 Lippincott is more difficult than level 5 Bank St.

What are the indicators that it's more difficult? Vocabulary mainly - also story development. Plots in stories would be more difficult and complex.

Lippincott is too difficult and in the beginning stages it's extremely boring. They'll give you the letter S and under it are twenty words that begin with the letter S and that's the way you teach it. The stories themselves are weak - they're so into developing the phonics skills that the stories are unimportant - boring also. Until you get up to higher levels-which most of our kids never reach-maybe 4th grade level. Because of that, kids don't want to do it.

What about Bank Street? Simpler, easier vocabulary. They have problems because the vocabulary is limited. Most of kids in Bank Street have difficulty reading. All of our children start out in Lippincott and if they fail that then they go into Bank Street. After they get up to Level 5 in Bank Street (that's about second grade) we try to get them back into Lippincott.

Why do you want to put them back into Lippincott? Bank Street is better in the lower grades in terms of story content. They understand that the kids in Bank Street are the one's that failed. They want to be in Lippincott.

What proportion are Lippincott? About two-thirds.

When they came to you at the beginning of third grade were they already in Lippincott? I'll usually read the records and see where the kid was last year -- sometimes I'll retest. Sometimes we'll give them a month to see how they're doing. If they're not having much success we'll move them to Bank Street or if they're having a lot of progress in Bank Street, we'll move them to Lippincott. But it's all done by testing.

When you say it "looks like they're having progress" what does that mean? I don't do any testing in my classroom. I'll basically use judgment in terms of oral reading. I prepare questions after every story. I give them the questions to answer independently. I use my judgment to see if they understand the story. I'm not heavy on phonics or workbook skills. I use my judgment if I think it's important. I can't see teaching third graders prepositions maybe I'll review it quickly or just skip it.

The reading teacher gives tests for each book and we confer.

Suppose they don't pass the test and you think they should? She'll usually go with me. Most of the time the kids who pass the test, I think are okay. We usually don't have any problems (maybe 1 out of 10).

The tests are prepared by the company and sometimes I think the Lippincott tests really poor - 2 answers are right or I disagree with their answer. I have trouble with questions like "What's the best title for this story?"

I try not to put the program down - that's what we have and we have to use it.

Are there other (supplemental) things you do in your reading program? Yes. We use a Barnell-Loft activity - read a short paragraph and answer a question about it. SRA sometimes. DLN kit - skill cards - like rhyming. I'm heavy into comprehension - there's a kit called "We are Black" and it's 120 biographies of black people. Kids have to read and answer questions.

These are of your own choosing - do you buy them? Well - they're available so I can just go borrow them. I don't concentrate on these - something they could do once a week if they choose to. Basically my program is Lippincott Spelling lists and workbooks are jobs from reading program.

What would like to see changed in Lippincott? What is really good about the program is some of the higher editions of the b-oks. If they would get away from some of the phonics a little bit and concentrate on story content.

Testing? I don't test because I don't think the testing situation is that natural. A lot of the testing is T-F or multiple choice - you can guess the right answer. I give spelling tests but I don't emphasize it.

Do you get information from print-outs of City-wide tests? I just put the numbers down - I don't really look at it. Results don't really help me.

Ordering materials-how do you choose? I'm big on comprehension. I like to order short books in a series by the same author - adventure series. In the backs of all the books I order I put comprehension questions.

What about trade books? We have a library here and I use that. I look for books in a series. Books on Africa by the same author.

Assessing pupil's progress in reading? Oral reading and comprehension. A kid that is having success has a desire to perform at that level. If he's frustrated, has a short attention span or is not paying attention. We read and discuss in a group and if a child doesn't seem to understand, it's really obvious if a child is having difficulty.

What do you do with that information? It's individualized. In my classroom-everyone has a number of jobs to do and there's a lot of choice jobs. I have room to work with a child who's having difficulty-give him extra work at the same level. Or if he's not making any progress we'll just move him down and work with him independently.

Or a child who seems to be really picking up the stuff - I'll say "Here read this book which maybe is a little bit more advanced. Maybe by reading it will prepare you for the next group." By the end of the year we could have 15 reading groups.

Grouping? Two classes together - 9 to 10 groups. I consider last year's records and put in children's books they're supposed to be in. We don't send kids out to other classes. If there's a question between book D or E I'll put him in D. Don't like to see the kids struggle at the beginning of year - I like them to be able to do the work at the beginning. Later I'll give him hard stuff.

Do groupings stay? More or less. But I don't hesitate to break up groups and will pull out kids. If five test well and five don't, the ones who don't, do something else. The reading teacher tests all the kids, but if we disagree she'll give me the benefit because I know the kids. Some teachers she doesn't trust, so it may not be good for them. It's a check on the teacher; I think it's good.

Where do you get ideas/what shapes your thinking? I take stuff from other teachers-my wife's a teacher and she's very creative. I talk to other independent activities. Learn a little from courses.

Other reading activities? I have silent reading - starts with 5 minutes. It's great--kids enjoy it--know they're not going to be tested. Important that teacher read too. Kids can choose anything they want (comics, newspaper). Each day's assignment in the Lippincott takes 30 minutes.

How are kids assigned? We have a part of it - if we fight for the kids. Depends on the teacher. Keeps whole class.

Connection with parents? I show them kid's work. They mostly want to know what grade level child's reading at.

Excerpt: Teacher Interview, Site C

Central features of your reading program? Structured part of our reading program is divided into two parts. We have two periods (morning and afternoon). In the morning I have divided children into groups (called book clubs). We have one book from literature that the whole group reads. An adult is assigned to each group to discuss, ask questions, assign writing. Along with this we have workbooks-used as an independent activity. I use workbooks to see if they can answer certain questions and follow directions.

We teach reading through book clubs - no basal readers. This is my second year and I've been doing it this way since I've been in this school - this is the way the school is set up. I have the most trouble with children at lower levels because I can't find enough easy books that are long enough to sustain interest over time.

In the afternoon we have a silent reading period - children can read anything they want. In the morning I insist that they read on their level, but in afternoon can read on any level (comic book to encyclopedia). I also have advanced children who are doing research projects and they can work on that during silent reading. I've also extended the period to include writing-basically a quiet period.

How did you get started? I've had silent reading for years - felt children need a quiet, non-directed (by teacher) activity after lunch and recess. I started what I learned later was SSR - because it worked.

What told you it was working? Children really were sitting and reading independently. From their body language - seemed relaxed. I was ready to do more observation of children - which I could do at that time.

I know a teacher is supposed to read also during that time - I found it a good time to pick up children I didn't get to in the morning or who needed extra help.

How did the morning part of your program get started? When I came to the school there were no books except library books. I spoke to Reading Coordinator and she said this was a system she was using. So I gathered together books.

How do you decide which books and which children go into a group? I look at the record cards, I listen to children read. The last year's teacher has to write her estimate of the child's reading level on the record card.

I have a third/fourth grade class. Have a group reading below third, a third grade, 4th grade and above 4th grade. Try to have four groups with

not more than eight children in a group. I may ask a teacher "What do you think, I'm confused about this child."

I have one set of basal readers (Bank Street) from my old school - I might have a child read to me from those to give me a clue.

Workbooks? They seem to be using the Merrill, so we just continued using them.

In this particular workbook they read a page and then there are different kinds of questions they have to answer - details, putting things in sequence, getting main ideas, spelling and alphabetizing. Once I have taught a skill I can see from the workbook whether they've gotten it.

I do a lot more lessons with children who are below grade level - children who are above grade level work independently.

Purchasing materials? Last year was the first time - I was feeling my way. I order reading workbooks.

How do you decide which series? There was a certain series that teachers in this school seemed to be using and I followed along with that. Last year I decided to have spelling workbooks, because I was sittfng down every Sunday trying to think of three spelling words - so boring. Spelling workbook has word families and writing assignments that go with it. There again, I figured grades 2-3-4 and 5 for third/fourth grade.

How did you decide which spelling workbook? I asked around to see if anyone knew of one. We have a publishers' fair, where there are materials to look at. I use the spelling workbook as a homework assignment. Looked at books at the book fair and talked to another teacher about what would be a good book to use.

Assessment of pupil progress? There's a feeling you can get from a child's whole affect of reading - whether they enjoy what they're reading, whether they are reading with ease or stumbling over words, whether they can answer questions - catch on to more subtle things in the story. Where you get this? In silent reading or oral reading, asking questions. Children have been moved from one book club to another at the end of a book if I see that the book was so easy for them. If I see that they can finish reading silent parts very quickly and still answer questions.

I had one child who when he read aloud every word was separated from every other word. We talked and I told him to read like he talked.

Place of tests? I think I know how the children are reading. A month before the test everyone gets tense - you start to teach for the test. Makes me angry because a lot of time is wasted.

We have worksheets with something to read and questions to answer. If you don't know answer how can you guess? An important skill for later, but not for third graders. Tests are often ambiguous. Child can read a sentence and understand it, but it doesn't fit her experience.

Tests tell you if child is a good test-taker. All I get is the score. I have one little boy in fourth grade who couldn't get certain kinds of questions and I was able to work with him. Makes you very anxious when test results are published in the newspaper. Now kids can be held back if they don't score well. If score is one grade lower-automatically held back.

What sort of decisions do you make about pacing? Last year I decided to do one chapter a week, but I found that was not enough for better readers. So this year we're doing two chapters a week. You just get a feel - depends on how long it takes to get answers.

Decisions about emphasis? I just want to keep certain things in mind. I want to see if they understand main idea, motivation, vocabulary, specific details of the story.

How are staff important to you as you make decisions? Reading coordinator introduced whole idea of book club, another teacher teaches on the same grade level and also uses book club. Student teachers and their advisors have been very helpful. Children order books from Scholastic and I've developed library that way.

Workshops? I went to a Teacher Center lecture - very good. Seldom get any validation for what you're doing. All you hear is back-to-basics. I've learned an enormous amount from the director of the Center and from my experience in the previous school.

Excerpt: Teacher Interview, Site D

Kinds of decisions related to reading program? An example (of specific instructional decision) is what I do in response to children's writing in their 'writing books'. All children write something and so the writing ranges from scribbles to fairly capable. If a word is not correctly written (e.g., som for some) I may comment on it, although I always complement child on how close the effort is. Or if child reverses a letter (tobay for today) I may point out the difference and write it in.

How do you decide when to make a correction? It depends on the child. With some children I want to encourage their fluency or efforts and would not correct. These decisions are individual and based on where a child is in general writing ability. I can tell where child is by looking at the daily entries.

Another example of a decision is my recent plan to change the books in the room every two weeks or so. I want to introduce children to much variety. It seemed to me that children didn't really see the variety when the same books were kept in same place week after week.

Decisions around purchase of books? May look for a topic that is currently thematic in the classroom and will pick a book even though it may be too hard for many to read, but has good pictures. Lately have also been picking books with chapters so that children learn that you don't necessarily zip through a book in one setting. To reinforce this I have been reading one chapter a day to them from Helen Keller book. May also purchase a book because it's from a series that I know is good, such as the easy Dell Yearling books. But even with easy books I want books to have content . . so kids can really get something from it. (Example: an easy book about clocks and time keeping devices.)

Does District or school prescribe any books? No. All books are either purchased by me or are ones that were available such as Breakthrough and Monster.

Evaluation of a child who is not making satisfactory progress? As an example, there is a boy who has negative feeling of 'I can't read' which interferes with learning. I pick very simple books that I know he can handle, and go from there. Also give him sight words in the Breakthrough folder that are in the books he reads, building up his ability to zip through a few easy ones.

How did you know the problem was lack of confidence? He had a real interest in books; loved to listen to reading. His skills indicated that he was ready to learn, but he would say "I can't."

Another child who is a fluent reader would only read certain books . . just the ones about Buffalo Bill. After he went through 6 of these I found him ones on the American West and now he is reading about more

topics. Yet another child always resists any of my suggestions, but can always find something else on her own.

Other decisions concern room arrangement and daily schedule. A lot of children are at the stage where they want to read to/with me. Has been difficult to schedule times when quiet, independent reading is happening. So decided to have older children come to class . . two days a week . . each to read with a particular individual . . a 'buddy system' . . I try to schedule things so that I hear every child regularly. Also send books home that parents are supposed to read to child . . books will be ones that the child seems interested in.

Makes no decisions concerning class composition since Kindergarteners are assigned as they come. These children then stay with her into first grade.

How important is listening to children read? The ones who are fluent, I hear only briefly, while the ones who are just beginning are heard more often. One good feature is that when they read aloud to me they hear that something doesn't make sense and will correct themselves. I try not to correct them much but to hear their tactics. Whether I interrupt depends upon particular child. Oral readings is one important way of checking but not the only way.

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Note: The comments in the following section are the teacher's reactions to taped oral reading sample. The question posed was: What do you hear in such samples?

The first thing that struck me is child's confidence. I don't know if she is familiar with the book but she just picked it up and started right in.

On page 1 she says face for fur, so initial consonants are important; also yellow for young, whiskers for wished. The substitutions make sense and even whiskers is reasonable, given the context. I might make mental notes about such errors to discuss them later with the child, but would not interrupt the actual reading.

The substitution error of barn for barrel is interesting. Barrel is not common in children's language, and choice of barn, as something to live in, makes sense. Later I might discuss this with child. Would point to picture of barrel and ask, "Do you know what this is?" . . would tell child the word and comment on how close attempt had been.

There are several self-corrections in this reading. The child also slowed down at one point as if listening to herself. It is interesting that she asked for help with nothing . . surprising that she didn't know no and thing.

I would not interrupt the reading but would go back to some of the errors, such as face/fur. Depending upon child would say, "look at this word again" "Do you think you can sound it out." If not, I would supply the word or ask child to use picture clues. Would not ask to sound out barrel since child does not know it; would give this word. Talk about it to have it become part of the vocabulary.

Children's reading errors give me an idea of how a child is going about the task.